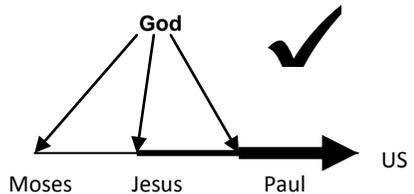
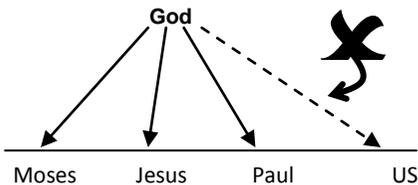


PROPHECY AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

HEBREWS 1:1-4

RECAP

1. God has spoken in the Bible – it is His Word
2. He has spoken perfectly and powerfully
3. He has spoken with clarity. The Bible isn't always easy. But we don't need special priests or experts to understand it
4. His Word in Scripture is sufficient – it is enough to achieve God's purposes
 - God has told us all we need – through Jesus, in His Word
 - God calls us NOT to receive new revelation but to remember what we have heard
 - God is still speaking what he has spoken
 - Implication: a new respect for Scripture



1. LEARNING FROM CHURCH HISTORY: DENIALS AND AFFIRMATIONS OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

Medieval error:

- Non-Scriptural church traditions →
- Church tradition reinforces the Bible →
- Church tradition necessary to interpret the Bible →
- The Spirit speaks not through Scripture, but through the Roman church

Radical Protestant / Anabaptist error:

Seeking the Spirit *apart from the Word*

- Roman church, Protestant radicals, later rationalists (e.g. Spinoza, Schleiermacher)

Reformation orthodoxy - e.g. 39 Articles (Article 6) & Westminster Confession (1.6)

2. PROPHECY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- **Canonical and authoritative prophets (“thus says the Lord”) – not just predictive, but calling people back to past revelation**
- **Other kinds of OT prophets**

1 Samuel 10:5-6, 10-12

1 Samuel 19:20-24

Numbers 11:24-29

2 Kings 2:1-17

1 Kings 13:1-34

1 Chronicles 25:1-7

- **OT prophets clear that the current practice was not the ideal – a different and better future**

Deuteronomy 18:14-22

^{ESV} Numbers 11:29, But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

Joel 2:28-29

3. PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- **The big picture (see previous session)**
 - **Acts 2 – Pentecost = fulfilment of Joel's prophecy**
Prophecy as sign of Spirit
All believers can prophesy, but not all are “prophets”
 - **Hebrews 1:1-2**
- **Prophecy in Acts**

11:27-30 famine predicted by Agabus

13:1-5 Paul and Barnabas set apart

21:4 urging through the Spirit (ignored!)

21:7-15 trouble in Jerusalem predicted (ignored!)

Comment: Specific and personal to Paul and companions. Not imparting or revealing doctrine – not strictly “necessary”. Open to wrong interpretation – needs weighing. Clearly under apostolic authority

- **Prophecy in 1 Corinthians**

11:5

12:7, 10-11; 29-31

13:2; 8-12

14:1,3-4; 22, 24-25; 26, 29-33

- **Prophecy in Ephesians**

2:20 and 3:5

“Apostles and prophets”: 3 options...

1. NT and OT canonical revelation
2. A foundational gift for the church that died out with the Apostles
3. Apostles as prophets (one group): the Apostles could be described as Prophets (Grudem)

- **Prophecy in 1 Thessalonians**

^{ESV} 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

4. Assessment and conclusion

- **Distinguish different types of “prophet” in the Bible**
- **All Christian are prophets**
- **There is an ongoing “gift” of prophecy (1 Thess. 5:20-21, 1 Cor. 14:3) – which is to be cultivated (we do it anyway!)**
- **Warning: watch out for fresh voices – and don’t make the extraordinary into the normal**

Typical mistakes:

- Spontaneity indicates authenticity
- OT prophetic model and authority invoked (“thus says the Lord”... no room for weighing)
- The only way God speaks today
- The best way God speaks today (primacy of teaching rejected)
- Sensationalism, not low profile

- **Helpful voices from church history**

“Insist not so much on your desires after vision, as to undervalue the lower apprehensions of faith; but love God by the way of faith... Know better the difference between thy travel and thy home; and know what is fit for passengers to expect... Thou must live, and love, and run, and fight, and conquer, and suffer by faith, if ever thou wilt come to see and to possess the crown.”

(Richard Baxter (d.1691), *The Christian Directory*, p130).

God, in His ordinary providence, makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure.

(*Westminster Confession of Faith*, “Of Providence”, 5.3)

“There are grave problems raised by the habit of giving and receiving personal “messages” of guidance through the gifts of the Spirit... The Bible gives a place for such direction from the Holy Spirit... But it must be kept in proportion. As examination of the Scriptures will show us that as a matter of fact the early Christians did not continually receive such voices from heaven. In most cases they made their decisions by the use of what we often call ‘sanctified common sense’ and lived quite normal lives. Many of our errors where spiritual gifts are concerned arise when we want to make the extraordinary and exceptional to be made frequent and habitual. Let all who develop excessive desire for ‘messages’ through the gifts take warning from the wreckage of past generations as well as contemporaries... The Holy Scriptures are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.”

(Assemblies of God pastor, Donald Gee, cited in Kevin De Young, *Just Do Something*, pp73-74).

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

(*39 Articles of Religion*, Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation, Article 6)

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

(*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1.6)